



# NEWS RELEASE

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## ***USDA Energy Grant Program Conference Held In Hesston***

### ***Agricultural Producers and Rural Businesses Eligible For Funding Assistance***

**Topeka, KS** – USDA Rural Development today hosted the Agency's 3<sup>rd</sup> annual statewide USDA Energy Conference covering the Agency's *Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement Program* in Hesston. The USDA Energy Conference, held at the Crosswinds Conference Center and attended by approximately 100 agricultural producers and rural business owners, was co-hosted with the Harvey County Economic Development Council.

USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks, in opening comments at the Conference, remarked, "Expanding renewable energy opportunities could well represent the most significant economic development opportunity for rural Kansas. The *Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement Program* provides farmers and ranchers, along with rural business owners, the opportunity to receive funding assistance to begin harnessing untapped renewable energy resources and achieve greater energy efficiency. Establishing renewable energy ventures and enhancing energy efficiencies not only supports economic development for Kansas, these efforts also make our Nation more energy independent and enhances our Nation's security".

During Fiscal Year 2006, the USDA *Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement Program* offers \$11.385 million in competitive grants and approximately \$176.5 million in guaranteed loans, to support investments in renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvements undertaken by eligible agricultural producers and rural business owners.

In his comments, Banks further stated, "The Agency appreciates the opportunity to provide information about this program, and how USDA funding assistance can benefit Kansas. USDA Rural Development is committed, through the Agency's programs and its network of partners, to assist Kansans to achieve their important community and economic development goals".

Projects eligible under this program must be for the purchase of a renewable energy system or to make energy efficiency improvements to business / non-residential facilities. Eligible renewable energy projects include systems that generate energy from wind, solar, biomass, or geothermal source or that produce hydrogen derived from biomass or water using a renewable energy source. Renewable energy projects can include the generation of electricity, heat, fuels, or hydrogen. Energy efficiency projects typically involve installing or upgrading equipment that results in a significant reduction in energy use from current operations. Detailed information about these types of energy projects was discussed at today's USDA Energy Conference.

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Applications submitted under the *Renewable Energy Systems & Energy Efficiency Improvement Program* must be mailed to the USDA Rural Development state office in Topeka, with a postmark no later than May 12, 2006. Detailed program requirements and application information was included in the February 13, 2006 publication of the Federal Register; this information can also be accessed through the Agency's website at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks> (see 'Renewable Energy / Energy Efficiency Information' link). Individuals who have an interest in the Program may also contact the USDA Rural Development office in Topeka at 785-271-2744.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs that support increasing economic opportunity and improving the quality of life of the State's rural residents. The Agency provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure in rural America. During Fiscal Year 2005, USDA Rural Development provided nearly \$235 million in direct funding for community and economic development projects across rural Kansas. Individuals who have an interest in learning more about USDA Rural Development programs may contact the Agency's office in Topeka at 785-271-2700, or may log onto the state's Agency website at: [www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks)

***USDA Rural Development – Committed to the future of rural communities.***

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